

Good Morning,

My name is Cameron Wilcox I am the psychiatrist and medical director of the Behavioral Health Program at Marquette General Hospital. We have a group of Psychiatrists, Psychologists, therapists and mid-levels treating inpatients and outpatients across the entire spectrum of ages from youth to geriatric. We have a 6 bed child inpatient treatment unit and a 32 bed adult unit. We are the only child psychiatric inpatient treatment north of Saginaw. Currently we are operating at a capacity of 28 due to shortage of psychiatrists.

Recent tragic events in our country have made clear the necessity of access to behavioral health care. I feel that UP has a strong commitment to caring for its mental health and wellbeing. We have quarterly meetings of various agencies involved in the care of the mentally ill, and we discuss current topics of concern and ways that we can coordinate with each other. We coordinate on a daily basis with CMH providers in the area to ensure that our inpatients get the best treatment possible.

We are dedicated at Marquette General to providing the best care possible for our patients, but there are many challenges to doing so. Due to lack of available facilities we often admit people from lower Michigan, especially to the child psychiatric unit. This transportation of between 200 and 400 miles is often costly and difficult for families and makes planning for a return home very difficult. Our current shortage of local outpatient psychiatrists in the area can make it difficult to get an inpatient follow up treatment in a timely manner, some of them cannot be scheduled and are returned to the care of their primary physician. We often treat very difficult patients that can require months of treatment before they reach a point that they are ready to return to the community. There are currently only two facilities in Michigan that can take these patients who need treatment for greater than three months and the wait to refer from our hospital to theirs can be up to a month. More treatment facilities in Michigan for both children and our sickest patients would help reduce this burden and help everyone get the treatment that they need.

We see many indigent patients on the unit. Often these patients have no ability to pay for their hospital stay and no ability to afford medication when they are discharged from the hospital. Providing these patients with insurance or medical coverage would insure that they continue to get the treatment that they need once they leave the hospital. Expanding Medicaid services in Michigan would help keep this population from relapsing as soon as they leave the hospital.

We feel that we are creatively using our minimal resources. We work hard to collaborate with the local CMH and other providers in the area. We have an excellent staff of clinicians and nurses that work with us. We are dedicated to continuing to address the mental health needs of the people of upper Michigan.